



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor

Thomas D. Watkins, Jr.
Superintendent of Public
Instruction

READ, EDUCATE AND DEVELOP YOUTH (R.E.A.D.Y.) PROGRAM

Governor Granholm in both her 2003 and 2004 State of the State addresses spoke about the important learning that takes place during a child's early years. Breakthroughs in medical science have taught us that 85 percent of a child's brain development occurs in the first three years of life. If the brain is purposefully stimulated and nurtured during this period, a child's lifelong capacity to learn is enhanced forever. Unfortunately, if it is not, an opportunity is lost forever.

Last year, the Governor began a revolution in education and declared that "Education in our state will begin at birth, not when a child enters kindergarten." She also announced Project Great Start and issued a call to arms, asking all sectors of our state to help our youngest children realize their tremendous potential for growth and intellectual development. Project Great Start is a statewide effort to coordinate both public and private efforts to achieve common objectives and measurable results for Michigan's youngest children. The Project encompasses both immediate action and creating a blueprint, or strategic plan, for Michigan's early childhood system of programs, services, and support for all children from birth to age five.

One key element of Project Great Start is the R.E.A.D.Y. program; and, specifically, the R.E.A.D.Y. infant kit.

History of R.E.A.D.Y.

In 1998, the Michigan Department of Education, in coordination with early childhood and early literacy experts throughout the state, designed the Read, Educate, and Develop Youth (R.E.A.D.Y.) program. This program was developed to provide parents and caregivers with engaging early childhood materials and activities to enhance a child's lifelong capacity to learn. The program is also a priority with both the State Board of Education and the Michigan Ready To Succeed Partnership.



R.E.A.D.Y. is a national award-winning program and has become one of the most effective, cost-efficient early childhood parent information efforts in Michigan's history. The main component of the R.E.A.D.Y. program is the R.E.A.D.Y. kit. This "How-To Kit" for parents contains over a dozen high-quality educational and early childhood development materials including a child development video, a children's book, a Sesame Street music cassette, parent/child learning activities, and much more.

R.E.A.D.Y. kits are available for parents of infants (ages 0-1), toddlers (ages 1-2), and preschoolers (ages 3-4).

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A GREAT START FOR R.E.A.D.Y.

To be responsive to parent and educator needs, in 2003 the R.E.A.D.Y. infant kit was expanded to include important health, safety, and nutrition information. New additions include the Michigan Department of Community Health; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Family Independence Agency brochures:

- *Lead – Is Your Child Safe?;*
- *Good for You, Good for Your Children;*
- *Breastfeeding: Getting Started in 5 Easy Steps;*
- *Save a Life, Sleep Right;*
- *MIChild Health Insurance You Need;*
- *MIChild/ Healthy Kids Application;*
- *How to Choose a Child Care Provider;*
- *Information on car seat safety, and*
- *Healthy Weight in Preschool Children information.*

New 2003 Infant Kit

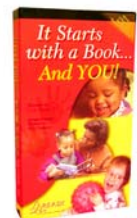


To store this information, we have added three new folders:

- Health and Safety;
- My Child's Records (for report cards, immunizations records, and other important information);
- Caring, Playing, and Learning (replaces the previous infant folder).

The R.E.A.D.Y. program has also developed several additional products including:

- The *R.E.A.D.Y. for School Literacy Pack* to provide parents of preschool and early elementary children with over thirty easy to use **literacy-building activities** centered on *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* book. The response to this "for sale" pack has been outstanding, resulting in orders for over 50,000 packets. Pack Cost \$3.75.
- The award-winning "It Starts with a Book ... And You" video illustrating model early childhood parent/child activities. This product is also for sale for \$6.50.
- The R.E.A.D.Y. Lending Library that includes a collection of 150 (3 copies of 50 titles) Scholastic books, lending bags, a message to parents and a display unit for \$300.00



With the exception of the R.E.A.D.Y. Lending Library, all kits and products are produced and distributed by Central Michigan University's Educational Materials Center. All R.E.A.D.Y. materials can be ordered online or by downloading a faxable order form by clicking <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/READY> or calling (800) 214-8961. The lending library can be ordered directly through Scholastic at 1-800-724-6527, item number 939049.

Program Results – R.E.A.D.Y. WORKS!

Program research shows:

- R.E.A.D.Y. is one of the most popular and successful parent information efforts in Michigan history stressing the importance of early learning and reading.
- Over 95 percent of families receiving the program's R.E.A.D.Y. kit remembered, valued, and used its materials.
- Parent comments included:

"I couldn't wait to get it open."

"It was like a gift."

"It offered a lot of information."

"It provided something educational for me and my child."

- Most parents used all or most of the kit components.
- Each kit component was rated very useful by an overwhelming majority (70-90%) of parents.
- Two thirds of parents and caregivers were motivated to read and interact more with their young child -- critical factors in ensuring children enter school READY.
- R.E.A.D.Y. has become a national model and was awarded the prestigious Council of State Governments (CSG) Innovations Award in 1999.
- Parents valued the kit at \$20-\$50.
- Parents, educators, communities, legislators, the State Board of Education, state and local agencies, and associations such as the Michigan Ready To Succeed Partnership, Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence (MBLEE), and others support the program.

GREAT EFFORT, GREAT RESULTS

As a result of the Governor's commitment, existing R.E.A.D.Y. inventory, and strong foundation support, the program is now able to:

- Provide 80,000 or two-thirds of parents of newborns with free kits, including 40,000 which will be given to parents of our neediest infants who qualify for Medicaid;
- Provide free Hispanic R.E.A.D.Y. kits to our Spanish speaking parents;
- Develop a new Arabic kit;
- All other parents and families can purchase R.E.A.D.Y. kits and products by visiting the Michigan Department of Education's web site at www.michigan.gov.mde or by calling our production and distribution partner, the Educational Materials Center, Central Michigan University (CMU) toll-free at (800)-214-8961.

R.E.A.D.Y. Kit Distribution

Since 1998, over **650,000** R.E.A.D.Y. kits have been hand-delivered to parents of young children in Michigan free of charge. In the past, R.E.A.D.Y. kits and products were distributed through a network of county coordinators. These included: intermediate school districts, Family Independence Agency offices, human service agencies, libraries, family resource centers, Multi-Purpose Collaborative Bodies (MPCB's), *Early On*® offices, Head Start programs, and others.

The new R.E.A.D.Y. infant kit will be distributed primarily through intermediate school districts and county health departments.

Funding for this program has been made possible through a combination of state and corporate foundation support. However, while the program has been proven both effective and cost efficient, as the result of declining state revenues, state funding for the program was eliminated in FY 2002. This required the program to begin offering kits at a low cost.

R.E.A.D.Y. Goes National

As a result of a high level of interest nationwide in the R.E.A.D.Y. kit and early childhood development, a similar National Infant Kit has been developed and is now available for parents and programs outside Michigan. The proceeds from national sales will be used to provide free kits to Michigan parents. The R.E.A.D.Y. for School Pack is also available nationally.

For additional information on this program, visit the Michigan Department of Education's [R.E.A.D.Y. web site](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140--33559--,00.html) at <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140--33559--,00.html> or contact Jan Ellis (517) 373-9391.

HOW TO ORDER

All R.E.A.D.Y. materials may now be ordered online or by downloading a faxable order form by clicking <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/READY>. This is a secure site managed by CMU's Educational Materials Center. They may also be reached at (800) 214-8961 or (989) 774-3953.

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